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## Relaxation Techniques for Stress Relief

No one can avoid all stress, but you can counteract it by learning how to produce a relaxation response, a state of deep rest that is the polar opposite of a stress response. The relaxation response puts the brakes on stress and brings your body and mind back into a state of equilibrium. In addition to its calming physical effects, the relaxation response also increases energy and focus, combats illness, relieves aches and pains, heightens problem-solving abilities, and boosts motivation and productivity. Best of all, anyone can reap these benefits with regular practice. Here are different ways you can activate your relaxation response:

### Technique 1: Breathing exercises

With its focus on full, cleansing breaths, deep breathing is a simple yet powerful relaxation technique. Deep breathing is the cornerstone of many other relaxation practices and can be combined with other relaxing elements such as aromatherapy and music. All you really need is a few minutes and a place to stretch out. The key to deep breathing is to breathe deeply from the abdomen, getting as much fresh air as possible in your lungs. When you take deep breaths from the abdomen, rather than shallow breaths from your upper chest, you inhale more oxygen. The more oxygen you get, the less tense, short of breath, and anxious you feel.

### Technique 2: Progressive muscle relaxation

Progressive muscle relaxation involves a two-step process in which you systematically tense and relax different muscle groups in the body. With regular practice, progressive muscle relaxation gives you an intimate familiarity with what tension—as well as complete relaxation—feels like in different parts of the body. This awareness helps you spot and counteract the first signs of the muscular tension that accompanies stress. And as your body relaxes, so will your mind.

### Technique 3: Rhythmic movement

Rhythmic exercise or physical activity that engages both your arms and legs—such as running, walking, swimming, dancing, rowing, or climbing—is most effective at relieving stress when performed mindfully. Mindfulness requires being fully engaged in the present moment, focusing your mind on how your body feels right now. As you move, instead of continuing to focus on your thoughts, focus on the sensations in your limbs and how your breathing complements your movement. If your mind wanders to other thoughts, gently return to focusing on your breathing and movement.

*Modified from Lawrence Robinson, Robert Segal, M.A., Jeanne Segal, Ph.D., and Melinda Smith, M.A. helpguide.org*

### 5 TIPS FOR ANXIETY RELIEF

1. Eat a healthy balanced diet
2. Relax and Sleep for 6 to 8 hours every night
3. Use deep breathing Techniques
4. Exercise, even if it is just taking a walk
5. Laugh...laughter is the best medicine

### HOW TO USE YOUR EAP:

ERC is your company's Employee Assistance Program (EAP). For additional information, visit our website

[www.ERCincorp.com](http://www.ERCincorp.com) or simply call 1-800-222-8590.